COMIX PLUGOLA

The latest minicomix from Jason Lutes are NEAR FICTION [75¢ pp], MUSTAFA [50¢ pp], HIGHBROW/LOWBROW [$1.45 pp], and an untitled mini with a red cover [$1.50 pp]. The red mini is one of the most creative ideas I've seen this year. Buy one. Box 979, 2 College St., Providence, RI 02901. -C.G.

VOID #1 is $1.50 from 5909 Alder St., Pittsburgh, PA 15232. This music zine contains some Crumb reprints.

PROPAGANDA WAR 3, 25¢/stamp.
Clark Dissmeyer
2313 Central #7
Kearney, NE 68847

It's still an unusual experience to read a Freak Brothers comic in color, but that's what you get in the 11th issue. $2.50 at your local dealer. Art by Gilbert Shelton, who created the Freak Brothers in 1968, the late Dave Sheridan, and Paul Mavrides.

Look for a Canadian comic called DRAWN AND QUARTERLY. Four issues to date. Large mag format. I enjoyed the autobiographical pages of Joe Matt in #4. Chester Brown of YUMMY FUR did the cover. Brown's latest is YUMMY 23 in which he details his historical struggle with PLAYBOY. The airbrushed women in that mag never really did it for me. I confess to buying the early issues and stashing them with my favorite comics in a trunk someone ripped off from my house when I was away in the Navy, but the Playmates were never real enough for me. I always had my sex fantasies about real women, usually those I knew however slightly, so it was interesting to read about someone who whacked off over centerfolds. I guess I always considered those women a bit dumb, too. They bought the Hefner hustle and not a one of them has yet become a major movie or television star. You see them once in awhile as walk-ons in teen exploitation movies, but Playboy has no track into model or casting agencies. The company stock is so low, I am surprised the magazine is still on sale at all.

Guy Colwell will continue his DOLL story with a fifth issue. From Rip Off Press in March of 1991.

TERRORESS 1 is $3 pp from Tom Roberts, 333 S. East Ave., #209, Oak Park, IL 60302. Standard comic book about a woman assassin. Psychologically improbable, but so was Valerie Solanis and SCUM [Society for Cutting Up Men].
Valerie shot Andy Warhol in an elevator in New York before most of you were born.

1991's Wonder Con is set for Oakland Convention Center, April 26-28. For info, send an SASE to Bryan Uhlenbrock, c/o Capital City Distribution, 720 Whitney St., San Leandro, CA 94577.

Nan Wood Graham was the model for the tight-lipped woman in Grant Wood's painting American Gothic. She died in Menlo Park, California, Dec 14, 1990, at the age of 91.

Con-Fusion will take place in San Diego Feb 16-18. Information from Mark Stadler, POB 948374, La Jolla, CA 92037. 619-544-9555.

Pop art was the ultimate justification of the capitalist vision, that everything is a product and everyone is a potential customer.

CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE 102 © 1991. P. O. Box 7094, Berkeley, CA 94707. World Rights Reserved. Artwork and quoted material herein © the artists concerned. Used here for promotional purposes only. $9 for the next twelve issues. Set of back issues $ 40 postpaid.

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF WONDER WOMAN

I'm sure most of you older readers remember comic book jungle and space heroines like Sheena, Tigra, Dale Arden, and Mysta of the Moon with a great deal of affection, but Wonder Woman has outlasted all of them. She's fifty years old in 1991! When I was eight, Wonder Woman showed up in the eighth issue of ALL STAR COMICS *in a star-spangled skirt* ! I didn't have any problem with a *woman* fighting crime. After all, Little Orphan Annie had been socking crooks in the funny papers since 1924 and by 1941 most of the regular funny books had women in skimpy little uniforms battling against the remnants of the mob, so why not Wonder Woman? She was designed to get the little girl reader, but that was a joke. If girls read comic books at all, they read Little Lulu or love comics. Superheroes and detectives were for boys, not girls. Any knucklehead knew that.

Wonder Woman was born full grown from the head of a New York psychologist named William Moulton Marsten, who signed his stories Charles Moulton. A demi-goddess, she grew up on Paradise Island, the daughter of Queen Hippolyta. She was named Diana After the huntress in mythology. If she had a father, little was said about him. Parthenogenesis was not uncommon in the comics during a period of time when children were told very little about sex. Diana might have remained on Paradise island, blissfully unaware of the male gender had it not been for the outbreak of the Second World War. That war brought American planes flying near the island; one of those planes crashed and the pilot, Steve Trevor, put an end to Diana's dreams of eternal celibacy. She saved him from drowning and when he was well enough to return to the war, she went along, not the first goddess to fall in love with a human. In later stories, she appears in the role of his secretary, disguised as Diana Prince, a role suspiciously analogous to that of Lois Lane in the Superman strip closely imitated by Marsten.

During the war, Diana joined the rest of the comic book superhero pantheon in the fight against the Nazis and the Japanese, and when the war ended she returned to confront the same cast of weird pulp villains and strange creatures fought in other comic books by the likes of Batman, The Flash, Aquaman, Green Lantern, The Human Torch, and the Blue Beetle.

In the first Wonder Woman story, Diana appeared in a skirt, but the editors decided this would be a bit risqué, and subsequent stories found her in snug fitting tights. Though modelled on Hedy Lamarr, a screen sexpot since her nude running scene in ECSTACY, Wonder Woman was less sexy than her rivals, crime fighting femmes like Miss America, Miss Patriot, Phantom Lady and Miss Fury. This was due partially to the sledgehammer drawing style of Harry G. Peter [his real name] who illustrated the Wonder Woman stories during the forties in both SENSATION COMICS and WONDER WOMAN quarterly, but Diana just didn't come on like a sex queen the way Phantom Lady did. She was too busy acting to pose. Diana Prince was always doing something, be it lassoing crooks with her magic golden lasso, flying around in her invisible plane, or chatting via her mental radio with her mom back on Paradise Island. She never lingered on panel in her underwear the way Matt Baker's Phantom Lady did. Di was too busy bouncing bullets off her magic bracelets.

Cheesecake in comic books a la Fox's BLUE BEETLE and PHANTOM LADY took a beating when women's liberation and feminism rose to the front in the late sixties and early 1970s, and while Phantom Lady did not make the cover of Ms. Magazine, Wonder Woman did. She was run on the cover of the second issue in 1973. I was surprised to see Diana adopted by the feminists; after all, she was simply Superman in drag, a ruse to attract the noncomicbook reading girls; what was feminist about that? Diana was a tough cookie who fought crooks and won, who rescued Steve and carried him around the same way Superman did Lois Lane. Lois fell out of open windows with more regularity than the SUPERMAN comic books made it to my neighborhood drugstore. Sheena's Bob and Diana's Steve were the big babies in the strip, carted about by their superheroine mommies and the consciousness of these pseudo-women characters was male, never female. The guys who read the comics were interested in the way women looked. They didn't care what they thought. Even when Wonder Woman was modernized by DC Comics in the early seventies, she was given a male Asian martial arts expert for her guru. The idea that a woman could function on

her own was alien to the heart of every male comic book artist. If cartoonists started drawing practical utilitarian uniforms on superheroines instead of crotchslice leotards and bathing suits,what would happen to sales? Think those young boys out there care if those space queens catch cold? Nope. Wonder Woman in street dress did not work for the predominantly male fans and it was not long before she was back in her star-spangled costume.

Now, we can rationalize her age by noting that she is practically immortal--after all her mother is a goddess, huh?--but chronologically, she would be in her seventies. I suspect the guys at MAD would have a good time with that. They might have Diana rocking on the porch of the Old Comic Characters Rest Home while Steve watched the Super Bowl game and gossiped about the good old days when he and Di were fighting spies.

Marston and Peters were good fantasists. Today's Wonder Woman is more realistic in some ways, but a lot further from her origin in others. Today she is sexy, flies around like Superman, and kills people. I don't know about you, but I always liked her invisible airplane. I remember the time Mad parodist Bill Elder had someone run into the plane and smash it into a pile of glass. What good did it do to have an invisible plane if the people who rode in it were still visible? The enemy had only to glance up and see these seated bodies moving throught the air. But, then I loved that kind of absurdity.

The bondage, always a part of Woman Woman's trip, was all in fun, too. It had no sexual connotations for the preadolescent boy in 1941. Someone was always tying Diane up like Stanten's SWEET GWENDOLYN, or she was tying someone else up with her magic lasso to make them confess. If you were tied up with that lasso, you were compelled by its inherent magic to tell the truth. Kinky, if you enjoy being tied up for sexual stimulation, but just a lot of fun if you don't. Remember, this was a time when bondage was a part of most adventure movies whether they took place in Western or urban settings. Gene Autry or Boston Blackie were just as likely to get tied up as Wonder Woman. The audience for those B movies was no more sophisticated psychologically than the average Wonder Woman reader who, I am sure, would be surprised to hear that bondage and discipline have anything to do with *abnormal* sexual practices. I suspect the whole thing was a carefully calculated plot to increase the sales of clothesline rope.

Lynda Carter breathed new life into Wonder Woman in December of 1976, but the character was first televised in a tv movie in 1974 with Cathy Lee Crosby. Lynda Carter played the classic Wonder Woman, foe of the Nazis, but when the series moved to CBS in the Fall of 1977, it was updated to the present time. Steve Trevor, a mere human would have been an old man, so he was replaced by his son, Steve Trevor, Jr., though both were played by Lyle Waggoner. In the original forties version, a big deal was made of Diana's speed and agility, her athletic prowess; this was retained in the tv series, but instead of removing her WAVE uniform to change to Wonder Woman, Diana Prince spun around while the chorus sang her name.

It is questionable that Wonder Woman would have survived without the renewed interest generated by the tv series. After the second World War ended in 1945, television, which had been shown at various fairs since 1928, was finally developed for mass consumption and it quickly replaced radio and movies as the predominant medium for pop entertainment. Television has been blamed by many as a major cause for the decline in comic book readership during the fifties. The children of these first tv viewers, however, returned to the comics in the sixties, and the medium survived and became a force to be reckoned with. By the late sixties, there were numerous cross influences within the media. Cartoonists sat and watched television as they drew and the ideas from one medium were recycled through another. By the seventies this became a standard routine. There had been comic books designed as movie tie-ins back in the fifties, just as there had been advertising giveaways designed to associate products with characters very early in the history of this country, but it all became big business with STAR WARS in 1975 and it was the STAR WARS trilogy that made it clear to movie makers that the time was ripe for the realization on film of the greatest adventures of the best known and loved comic book characters. By the eighties, SUPERMAN, SUPERGIRL, SHEENA, BATMAN, and numerous others were dominating the mall cineplexes and comic book companies were almost as numerous as they had been at the peak of the medium in 1944. Just as the image of Hedy Lamarr had influenced Harry Peter's rendition of Wonder Woman in 1941, so did the image of Lynda Carter influence the artists who took over the character in the late seventies and revived her for another round. Today's Wonder Woman has a sexual aspect that forties Wonder Woman lacked; Now what this might suggest on one level is that the current readership is older and more sexually aware, but millions of comic books were read by service men during the big war and all of these men were past puberty, so a more logical conclusion is that the overt sexuality of the underground and alternative comix of the late sixties and early seventies left their mark on those budding artists who wound up in the bullpens of the present drawing and inking characters like Dazzler and Wonder Woman. Batman was even allowed to father a child in SON OF THE DEMON, something that would have been unheard of in 1939 when that character evolved out of Mary Roberts Rinehart's THE BAT and Gibson's THE SHADOW.

Wonder Woman survived because she was an original and all of the imitations like Phantom Lady, Blonde Phantom, Miss America, Miss Fury, Miss Patriot, Sweet Gwendolyn, Torchy and the countless other cheesecake heroines of the Golden Age of comics hung up their uniforms and retired to that Rest Home for Old Comic Characters. Ultimately, Diana Prince, Wonder Woman proved herself the immortal William Moulton Marsten said she was.

This year's San Diego Con is scheduled for July 4-9, 1991. Info from POB 128458, San Diego, CA 92112.

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-with apologies to the memory of JACK COLE-

TWISTED IMAGE by Ace Backwords ©1990
SOME CYNICS THINK THE REASON WE'RE INVADING IRAQ IS BECAUSE THE BIG OIL COMPANIES WANNA GET THEIR GREEDY MITTS ON ALL THAT OIL....
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKES, NO!!
...IT'S BECAUSE AMERICA HAS A MORAL OBLIGATION TO STAND UP TO FASCIST DICTATORS LIKE SADDAM HUSSEIN ALL ACROSS THE GLOBE!!
MR. PRESIDENT...IF AMERICA IS SUCH A MORAL AUTHORITY, HOW COME WE SPENT YEARS GIVING COMPLETE MILITARY SUPPORT TO FASCIST DICTATORS LIKE THE SHAH OF IRAN, PRES. MARCOS OF THE PHILLIPINES, AND GENERAL PINOCHET OF CHILE, WHO REGULARLY TORTURED AND MURDERED THEIR OWN CITIZENS?
THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT THEY WERE GOOD FASCISTS.... WHEREAS HUSSEIN IS A BAD FASCIST!!!
SO YOU SEE...IT ALL MAKES PERFECT SENSE